The Berkshire Flyer

Connecting Pittsfield and NYC through Seamless Transit
Rail Service between Pittsfield & New York City

1. Feasibility Study (2017 - 2018)
2. Berkshire Flyer 2.0 (Now)
3. Pilot Project (by 2020)
Overview of Phase 1 - Feasibility

The 2018 Phase 1 Feasibility Study:

- Identified and evaluated potential routes
- Estimated capital and operating costs
- Summarized key factors in the potential market demand for service
Who helped develop the feasibility study?

- $100,000 secured in state budget for feasibility and implementation by Senator Hinds
- Feasibility study developed by MassDOT transit & rail division
- Berkshire Flyer working group
- Outreach and assistance by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Market study by 1Berkshire & MCLA
- Local stakeholders including taxi companies and BRTA
Who is there to gain?

- Tourists
- Zero Car Households
- Second Homeowners

Primary mailing addresses in NYC with second homes in Berkshire County
Source: MCLA Market Research Report, 2017
What is there to gain?

• There are large number of people coming from New York City to Berkshire County, whether for seasonal living or vacation

• Economic Investment

• Less of a reliance on single occupant automobiles from visitors
What was looked at when determining route?

- Existing Models
  - CapeFLYER
  - Ethan Allen Express (Rutland, VT – Albany, NY – New York, NY)
  - Amtrak Downeaster (Boston, MA – Portland, ME)
Route Alternatives Evaluated

• Option 1A – Albany/Rensselaer
  • Option 1B – Berkshire Flyer Express
• Option 2 – Schodack Subdivision
Route 1: Via Albany-Rensselaer
Route 1: Via Albany-Rensselaer

What it offers:

• 191 miles

• Double track for 147 miles in NY; single track for 44 miles in NY and MA

• Passenger speeds between Pittsfield and Albany vary from 30 to 79 mph.

• Passenger speeds between Albany and NYC vary from 30 to 110 mph.

• Estimated trip time (including stops) approximately 3.75 to 4 hours
Route 1: Via Albany-Rensselaer

What it needs:

• Extra locomotive to allow for turn at Pittsfield
• One trainset may be needed on Sundays depending on Amtrak equipment availability
Route 1: Via Albany-Rensselaer

Advantages:
• Opportunity to build on existing Amtrak service
• Uses ROW that already meets Amtrak’s standards

Challenges:
• Schedule and seat capacity are limited by existing service
• Equipment availability
• Approximately 20 minutes longer trip than Route 2
Route 2 – Schodack Subdivision
Route 2 – Schodack Subdivision

What it Offers

• 173 miles

• Double track for 126 miles in NY; single track for 47 miles in NY and MA

• Passenger speeds between Pittsfield and Hudson vary from 30 to 60 mph. Passenger speeds between Hudson and NYC vary from 30 to 110 mph.

• Estimated trip time (including stops) approximately 3.5 to 3.75 hours
Route 2 – Schodack Subdivision

What it needs:

• Two spare equipment sets from Amtrak
• Extra locomotive to allow for turn at Pittsfield
• Build new connection track for Amtrak service, and 11 miles of route would need to be brought up to Amtrak standards and obtain agreement.
Route 2 – Schodack Subdivision

Advantages:
• 18 miles shorter than Route 1
• 4-minute shorter travel time than Route 1
• 15-minute time savings over Route 1 from not turning at Albany/Rensselaer

Challenges:
• Schedule capacity limits of existing route and stations
• Equipment availability
• Lack of service for Albany/Rensselaer passengers
• Significant right-of-way, permitting, engineering, and construction issues for new connection track
• 11 miles of Route does not have existing Amtrak-CSX Agreements in place
Proposed Route and Services

- Estimated 20–weeks of service annually
- Estimated Trip Time: 3:50 – 4:00 (Friday depart NY Penn 2:20 pm – arrive Albany/Rensselaer 4:50 pm - arrive Pittsfield 6:10 pm; Sunday depart Pittsfield 2:45 pm – arrive Albany/Rensselaer 3:55 pm – arrive NY Penn 6:45 pm)

Amtrak Schedule of Proposed Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Berkshire Flyer: Friday Outbound (Northbound)</th>
<th>Berkshire Flyer: Sunday Return (Southbound)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stations</td>
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<td>190</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Penn</td>
<td>190</td>
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Note: MP = Milepost

Source: Mass DOT, 2018
What are the costs?

Capital Costs
• No capital costs associated with using existing Amtrak rail

Operating Costs
• Estimated Berkshire Ridership: 2,600 one-way trips
• Estimated Gross Operating Cost: $421,561
• Estimated Revenue: $184,000
• Estimated Net Operating Cost: $237,561
• Estimated Cost per trip: $162.13
• Comparable Market based fare: $70-$75 one-way
Berkshire Flyer 2.0 – Implementation

To Identify and Evaluate the Issues, Benefits, and Challenges to Creating a Seasonal Rail Service between New York City and Berkshire County
Study Focus

• Identify and evaluate last mile/local transportation options in Berkshire county
• Evaluate ridership data
• Develop a marketing strategy
• Identify and develop private partnerships
Existing Transportation Options for “The Last Mile”

• BRTA Bus Routes
  • 14 Bus Routes throughout the County, with possibility for limited expansion
  • Between 6:00am & 6:30pm
  • Low fare

• Ridesharing
  • Uber & Lyft
  • 24/7 depending on driver availability
Existing Transportation Options for “The Last Mile”

• **Taxi/Luxury Car Services**
  • Approximately ten different taxi services available throughout Berkshire County
  • Most are county-wide services with a variety of hours

• **Shuttle Services**
  • Many times limited to hotel / resort guests (e.g. Canyon Ranch & Kripalu)
  • *Transport the People* interested in collaborative shuttle service

• **Car Rental**
  • Enterprise
Marketing Strategy

• Develop Flyer “brand”
• Co-market with existing attractions
• 1Berkshire
• Selected targeted marketing to attract new visitors.
Next Steps

• Complete Flyer 2.0 Report
• Secure Operational Agreements
• Secure Operational Support
• Conduct Marketing Program
• Establish Metrics to Measure Success
Pilot Program Evaluation

- Adoption by service sponsor (Champion and backstop)
- Demonstrated support by key stakeholders and public
- Metrics on ridership, revenue targets, and methods for performance evaluation –
- Time frame for pilot duration (2 or 3 years)
Contact Information

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